

# **Ministerial Report**

## **Lebanese Employment Project Progress and Prospects**

Office of the Minister of Ethnic Affairs  
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LEBANESE EMPLOYMENT PROJECT: PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS

A Report of the Lebanese Employment Committee  
to the Minister for Ethnic Affairs

JANUARY, 1985

## FOREWORD

One of the main concerns of the Government since 1982 has been to generate appropriate economic and social policies aimed at increasing employment opportunities for all residents in Victoria. In this regard, one of the main priorities guiding the work of the Ethnic Affairs Commission has been to consider policies aimed at providing employment for Victoria's migrant communities, many of whom have extremely high rates of unemployment. One ethnic community that is bearing the brunt of economic change at present is the Lebanese community. This report documents the progress we have made in attempting to tackle this problem.

After establishment of the Ethnic Affairs Commission in March, 1983 a research and policy division was developed, with one of its main priorities being to monitor labour force trends of migrant communities. It soon became apparent that members of the Lebanese community along with those of the Indo-Chinese communities were among the most vulnerable of our residents. As a consequence of this we established a task force to follow up discussions with Lebanese community groups, employers, unions and Government Departments as to how we might tackle such issues. It was decided to establish a Lebanese Employment Committee to follow through on these discussions and develop such pilot projects that might be the basis for meaningful job creation for the Lebanese. This Committee was formed in November 1983, and its members being Dr Afif Hadj (Chairperson); Mr Trevor Batrouney; Father Leo Saleeba; Mr Said Sidaoui; Ms Mona Rafhi; and Mr Habib Haddad. All were of Lebanese background and had a wide experience of working with the Lebanese community.

Resources were provided to this Lebanese Employment Committee by the Minister of Employment and Training (Mr Simmonds) in February, 1984 which enabled the use of three support staff. This project commenced in March. It was based at the Ethnic Affairs Commission and was supervised and supported by the Division of Research and Policy of the Commission.

The methodology employed in developing this project is probably equally as important as the actual employment schemes created thus far. It is based on the assessment that to create meaningful employment, means that Governments must be aware of the wide economic context of the day and also the particular background experiences (work, training etc.), knowledge and understanding of each group it is attempting to assist. In other words Governments should attempt to provide both macro policies and specific micro-initiatives aimed at specific groups within this overall economic context. Consequently the Lebanese Employment Team commenced by analysis of wide socio-economic trends affecting Lebanese employment in Victoria and of various alternate employment and training schemes that have been used. It then spent some time discussing these findings and alternatives with various members of Lebanese groups in their own communities, clubs and houses.

Following this analysis and community discussions it became apparent that the type of employment scheme that most appealed to many Lebanese was that of worker co-operatives. This was because most unemployed Lebanese were recent arrivals, (since 1976) who had largely come from cities in Lebanon where they had been involved in small businesses or entrepreneurial activities, some of which had been run on a co-operative basis. On arrival in Australia, they did not have the capital to establish a business, had problems in learning English, had few recognizable qualifications and most had large families to support.

Since 1976 there have been limited employment opportunities in manufacturing industry and in many areas of retail trades. For all these reasons many Lebanese have only had a limited experience of employment in Victoria and were not able to participate in public sector and/or professional training schemes. Many believed the best ways to utilize their skills and experience would be in areas of small business development and in establishment of worker co-operatives.

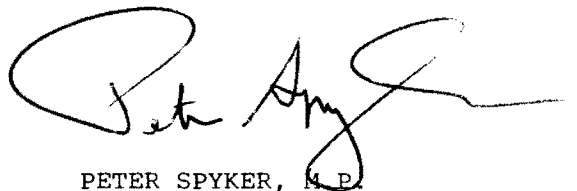
As a consequence of this the Lebanese Employment Group in co-operation with the Ministry of Employment and Training and the Ethnic Affairs Commission organized a series of workshops around the issues involved in establishing worker co-operatives. This was followed by a long period of intensive follow up discussions with all Lebanese groups who displayed an interest in participating in such job generating schemes. Some groups then attended a special "worker co-operative intenders course" provided by Preston TAFE. Following this and further discussions and negotiations two Lebanese Groups have begun to establish worker co-operative enterprises - one in Broadmeadows providing a co-operative based Middle Eastern supermarket; the other in Coburg to provide a co-operative based community restaurant. The 16 members of these two co-operatives are presently enrolled at Preston TAFE for a 3 month period, where they are developing the skills (accounting, marketing, business organization etc.) to produce enterprise plans detailing how the two co-operatives will be established, organized and maintained.

The enterprise plans will be assessed by the Ministry of Employment and Training and then the two co-operatives will be provided with some financial assistance (including loans for purchase of equipment and some wage subsidies) to establish the ventures.

This report documents progress of this project in some detail. We believe such a project is important, not only because it is providing immediate employment prospects for a group of disadvantage unemployed Lebanese, but also because it has implications for other communities. We believe the project is a model for future work with other ethnic communities with high unemployment, in that it attempts to develop a methodology where Government work in close co-operation with the community it wants to assist, rather than in a paternalistic manner of working for them.

Over the next year we are committed to continue to work with the Lebanese groups as they establish their co-operatives and we intend to then work with them to evaluate the lessons learned in developing their co-operatives. At all stages we intend to share our findings with other Lebanese and with other migrant communities - through reports, seminars, programs on ethnic radio and use of ethnic press. It is in this regard that I have pleasure in providing this progress report. We hope that the report will be read by all persons and groups concerned about the situation of unemployed migrants and their families.

Any comments and suggestions would be welcomed and should be directed to Mr. Demetri Dollis of my office.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Spyker', with a large, stylized initial 'P' and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PETER SPYKER, M.P.

Minister for Ethnic Affairs

JANUARY, 1985

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## INTRODUCTION

Unemployment among migrant communities is one of the most pressing issues facing Australian society. At the broadest level efforts to address this issue should attempt to understand and relate two factors; one, the characteristics of each migrant community and, secondly, the economic context in which they find themselves.

One community with which the Ethnic Affairs Commission has worked is the Lebanese, especially those recently arrived who have settled in Australia during a period of prolonged recession and economic change.

This paper attempts to describe the situation of the Lebanese community, the pressures on it and the response of the Commission through the Lebanese Employment Project.

In brief, the Project was initiated in response to the Commission's concern at the very high unemployment rate of Lebanese as recorded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in its monthly labour force survey. Initially the Commission organised a number of consultations with representatives of the Lebanese community in order to address this situation. Arising from these consultations a Lebanese Employment Committee was appointed. The function of the Committee was to advise on appropriate ways in which employment opportunities could be created among the Lebanese community.

## THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT

### Migration and Employment

For the purposes of this paper the post world war period in Australia may be considered as having two related elements. First, it was a period of economic growth and development with much of Australia's manufacturing industry being established at this time. Partly this was in response to the world-wide post war recovery and also due to specific action by Australian Governments to foster and protect the manufacturing sector.



Secondly, related to this, Australia embarked on a policy of large-scale immigration. Throughout most of the 1950's and 1960's Australia accepted each year in excess of 100,000 settlers. Migrants were needed, it was believed, to increase the population, which had been depleted by war and this in turn would contribute to economic growth and defence security.

Because of the available supply of overseas labour during the 1950's and 1960's a number of industries came to rely on migrant labour. Major projects such as the Snowy Mountain Scheme were possible only with a steady inflow of labour and certain industries such as metal processing, vehicle building, textiles and clothing relied heavily on the migration programme as labourers and consumers. (see Access and Equity, 1983).

#### Unemployment in Australia

Prior to the 1970's Australia's level of unemployment was very low, consistently under 2%. This was considered to be virtually full employment. During the election campaign of 1972 the unemployment rate of 2.7% was considered to be unacceptable. Following the recession of 1974 unemployment jumped to 5.0%. In the late seventies the rate of increase slowed down but by March 1982 the rate stood at 6.6%. However, 1982 pushed the unemployment rate in a single year to record heights. By February 1983 the rate had risen to 10.7%. Since then the rate has abated to just on 8% at the time of writing (December 1984), a phase which has reversed the upward spiral but which is still considerably higher than the level two years ago.

To make matters worse the officially published unemployment rates do not include the 'hidden unemployed' - those unemployed people who want a job but have given up actively seeking work. It is generally believed that this group could be as large as the official unemployed group (see Stricker and Sheehan, 1981, and Social Indicators No. 4, 1984).

It seems likely that the high levels of unemployment will continue. In spite of an economic revival it has proved extremely difficult to reduce the unemployment rate. Further, it is probable that some longer term pressures including structural and technological change will inhibit rapid job creation.

### Migrant Unemployment

It is well understood that the unemployment rates of many though not all migrant communities are higher than the general community average. The reasons for the difference are not the same for each community. Thus, for example, we know that recent arrivals tend to have, understandably, higher unemployment rates. Accordingly, communities with a high proportion of recent arrivals (such as the Vietnamese and Lebanese) will also tend to have a high unemployment rate. Similar points may be made with regard to the age structure of various communities.

To a large extent the unemployment rate of any ethnic community may be seen as a reflection of the mix of a number of characteristics including period of arrival, age, occupation and level of qualifications. As such, caution is needed when interpreting unemployment levels for any community. (see E.A.C. 'Migrants in The Workforce' No. 4 The Employment Situation Of Smaller Ethnic Communities, August, 1984).

One way to illustrate this situation is to compare the situation of three ethnic groups which, in Victoria, are similar in size and all recently arrived. In the following tables some characteristics of the Lebanese, Turkish and Malaysian born groups are contrasted. Table 1 provides information on qualifications -

TABLE 1 - Qualifications of Three Ethnic Communities, 1981 (VICTORIA)

	Lebanese	Turks	Malaysians	Community Average
Total Qualified	13.6%	12.8%	43.9%	31.4%
No Qualifications	74.5%	73.9%	42.9%	57.3%
% Degree or Diploma	1.8%	2.6%	34.8%	8.6%
Still at School	6.9%	6.8%	8.8%	3.6%

Source: ABS, 1981 Cross Classified Table No 61

A further comparison may be made showing the occupational structure of each community -

TABLE 2 - Occupations of Three Ethnic Communities (1981)

	Professional, Technical & Related Workers	Clerical Workers	Sales Workers	Tradesmen, Production Process Workers & Labourers	Service, Sport & Recreation Workers
Turkey	3.1%	4.6%	3.9%	68.1%	5.2%
Malaysia	45.2%	16.5%	5.1%	10.3%	11.1%
Lebanon	2.4%	5.8%	13.6%	49.1%	7.2%
Total Employed	13.6%	17.1%	8.5%	28.1%	8.4%

Source: ABS 1981 Cross Classified Table No 8

From this table we find that the Malaysian born are concentrated in different occupations to the Lebanese and Turkish born. Broadly speaking the Malaysian born have been concentrated in white-collar jobs which have been expanding while the Lebanese and Turkish born are concentrated in blue-collar jobs an area which has seen a considerable decline in recent years.

If we look at the unemployment rates of these groups we find that the rates reflect these characteristics.

TABLE 3 - Unemployment Rates of Three Ethnic Communities (1981)

Turkey	13.8%
Malaysia	5.7%
Lebanon	17.4%
TOTAL	5.6%

Source: E.A.C. "Migrants and the Workforce" No. 4, Smaller Ethnic Communities. August, 1984

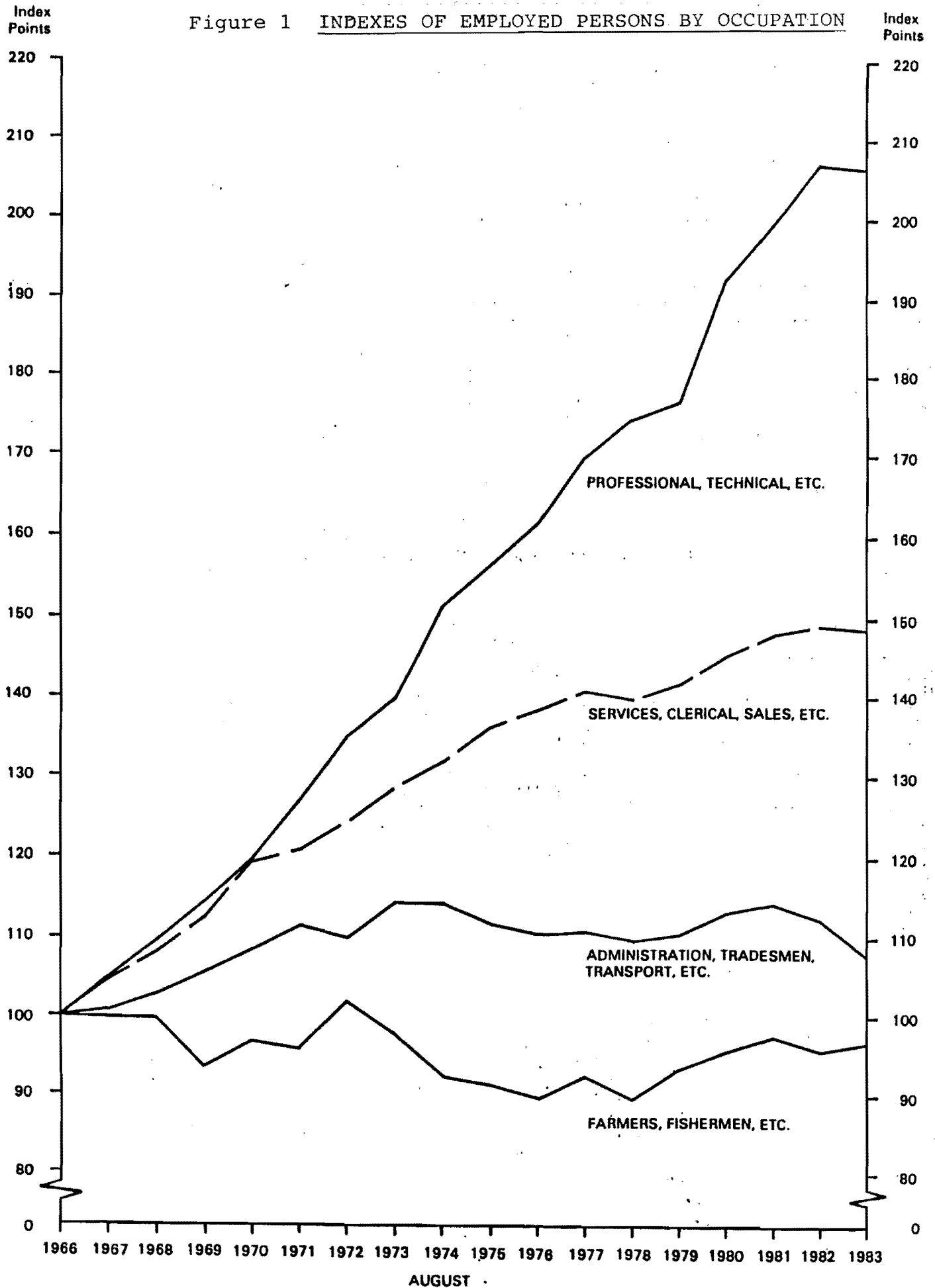
Figure 1 INDEXES OF EMPLOYED PERSONS BY OCCUPATION

Figure 1 shows the relative growth of certain occupational groups between 1966 and 1983. It should be noted (see table 2) that the Malaysian born population is concentrated in the occupations with the greatest growth, whereas the Turkish and Lebanese born are concentrated in the occupations with relatively little growth. This figure shows that there has been strong growth for professional and technical occupations whereas tradesmen have increased only slightly.

The data provided show the composition of the Lebanese and Turkish workforce to be different to that from Malaysia. We note the predominance of unskilled and manual workers among the Lebanese and Turkish born.

This is understandable given the history of post-war migration to Australia. During the period of growth in industry and the workforce, the Australian worker was more mobile, being able to move into better paid jobs, skilled apprenticeships and better trained areas of the workforce, leaving the dirty, low paid jobs to migrant labour. When the shortage of labour existed in the boom years, the more successful, expanding and attractive sectors of employment were able to recruit the best qualified workers and the pick of the new immigrants. The Malaysians, given their above average proportion of qualified workers, were able to enter sectors of the economy that were still expanding.

With the present economic crisis, coupled with structural change in the economy, we are now witnessing a stagnation of this mobility. Furthermore, we find no evidence that the workers who were upwardly mobile in the boom years are beginning to displace migrant workers in the dirty jobs. If anything the stratification of the workplace is becoming more rigid and static.

Recently arrived, unskilled or semi-skilled migrants who normally took the jobs in the dirty, badly paid occupations are finding it more difficult to enter these jobs because the industries are in decline. As for the ethnic groups that are now concentrated in these industries, they are no longer mobile but are becoming further entrenched and dependent on those industries.

Perhaps because of these and similar processes what has happened, particularly since 1982, is that migrant workers from non-English speaking countries are experiencing a more rapidly deteriorating employment situation than English speaking migrants or Australian born. It is clear that certain groups of migrant workers have borne a heavy share of the economic burden. (See E.A.C. 'Migrants in the Workforce' No. 6, A Review of Current Trends)

It is within this general context that we now consider the social situation of Lebanese born in Victoria.

## THE LEBANESE COMMUNITY IN VICTORIA

### Migration And Settlement

The composition of the Lebanese community is complex, not only because of the variety of social, religious and class differences but also because the community has arrived in different waves of migration.

It has already been documented by Young et. al. that "for reasons such as overpopulation, poverty, religious conflicts or the influence of American missionaries, the Lebanese have been migrating to other distant countries, including Australia, for over a century" (p 82). Migration in the nineteenth century was small and by 1900 there were estimated to be no more than 1500 Lebanese in Australia. It is believed that these people were mainly Christian and established themselves as hawkers, traders or gardeners. (It should be noted here that in referring to 'Christian' and 'Muslim' we are not referring only to religious traditions but to the social differences that make Lebanon such a diverse community).

Numbers of Lebanese in Australia remained low until after the second world war when during the fifties and sixties the numbers gradually increased. The intake grew dramatically during the 1970's during which time the Lebanese born population more than doubled. Table 4 provides an indication of the growth of the Lebanese community.

TABLE 4 - Lebanese Born in Australia 1901 - 1981

<u>CENSUS DATE</u>	<u>NO. LEBANESE</u>
1901	1,500
1911	1,527
1921	1,803
1933	2,020
1947	1,886
1954	3,861
1961	7,253
1966	10,668
1971	24,218
1976	33,424
1981	49,625

Source: Price (1979) and ABS 1983

It should be noted that these changes, particularly the large influx during the mid-seventies had a profound effect on the Lebanese community in Australia. The large intake numbers alone, relative to the size of the established community, would have caused strain but it must be noted that this occurred during a period when the Lebanese in Australia felt the bitterness and division created by the civil war in Lebanon.

Another way of presenting the change is to note that from the early 1970's the composition of what was an essentially a denominationally Christian community began to change as the number of Muslims increased. In 1976, 75% of the Lebanese born population were Christian and 25% were Muslim. By 1981 that ratio had moved closer to 60:40. In essence this meant that over 60% of the post 1976 immigrants were Muslim.

The effect of this has been summarised by one commentator in the following way:

"Clearly 1975/76 was a watershed in the development of the Lebanese community in Melbourne. Changes in the number and background of the post Civil War immigrants altered the size and composition of the community. More importantly, distinct changes in the causes, rate and process of immigration from Lebanon directly affected the community in Melbourne. Community leaders claimed that this period exhausted the resources of both community organizations and families already settled in Melbourne. The political conflict in Lebanon, reflected in the expatriate community, exacerbated problems in coping with the sudden influx.

Furthermore, this fourth wave of immigration from Lebanon had an important psychological effect on the established community. It challenged the self-perception of the Melbourne community. This is clearly shown in the interviews with early 60's and late 50's settlers who spoke nostalgically of a united, Christian, respectable, upwardly mobile, propertied, business-oriented community which, through its religious leaders, had developed links with people thought to be influential in government, professional and business circles.

The Civil War shattered that self-image and caused it to be replaced by the power struggles that had reduced Lebanon to chaos, thereby depriving the new arrivals of many of the established leaders and the resources they controlled. Old settlers deserted the established Australian Lebanese Association, that had been unable to maintain the somewhat artificial (Christian) unity of the Melbourne Lebanese in the face of the political and religious divisions that suddenly became a reality in Australia. These divisions also began to take on a geographic dimension with a significant number of new settlers establishing their own informal "village" networks in suburbs to the West of Melbourne that had little or no communication with the formal organizations based in the northern suburbs of Melbourne.

As indicated in the earlier discussion of the available statistics, these changes had been occurring in Melbourne since the early 70s. However, the rapidity of the change in the mid 70s, accompanied by the profound impact of the Civil War on the established community, created additional problems for the settlement of the post 1976 arrivals. Sadly, the new-arrivals were blamed for changes of a far-reaching and fundamental nature that were already occurring in both Australia and Lebanon." (Batrouney: 15)



Given these socio-demographic trends it is clear that any policies designed to assist the Lebanese community must take account of the diversity of the population, their various periods of settlement and the complex social relations between the groups.

### Unemployment Among the Lebanese Community

Unemployment data are provided monthly by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and are derived from surveys of the total population, Australia wide. Unemployment rates for the Lebanese born have been provided by the Bureau since August 1980. At that time the Lebanese unemployment rate was 21.5% compared to an overall rate of 5.9%, that is, the Lebanese rate was more than three times that of the total labour force. Since then the rate has increased substantially but, with fluctuations, it has remained at approximately three times that of the total labour force. Thus, the ratio between the rate for the Lebanese and total labour force at October 1984 (see Table 5) was little more than would have been expected. A listing for each month since 1981 is provided in Appendix I. It seems likely that the ratio between Lebanese and the total labour force over the last 3 years has fluctuated mainly due to sampling variability.

Table 5 provides some current (October 1984) unemployment rates for comparison.

TABLE 5 - Unemployment Rates of Selected Groups, Australia, October, 1984

<u>BIRTHPLACE</u>	<u>MALES*</u>	<u>PERSONS</u>
	%	%
Australia	7.6	7.7
Lebanon	27.7	31.4
Total Asia	15.7	15.9
Europe	7.9	7.9
All Overseas Born	9.1	9.3
Total Labour Force	8.0	8.1

\*N.B. The Labour Force Bulletin for October 1984 does not provide data for Lebanese females.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, The Labour Force, Australia October 1984 (Catalogue No. 6203.0)

It has been noted above that a number of factors relate to the unemployment rate of any community. One important factor is the industries in which they work. In common with the experience of other migrant communities, recently arrived Lebanese tend to work in manual, less skilled occupations and to work in industries such as manufacturing and construction. This is so for the Lebanese as data in Table 6 demonstrate. Significantly the recession has hit these areas hardest.

TABLE 6 - Selected Industries of the Lebanese born by Period of Arrival  
(Victoria 1981)

PERIOD OF RESIDENCE	MANUFACTURING		WHOLESALE RETAILING		UNEMPLOYED		TOTAL IN WORKFORCE	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
- 1 Years	15	44.1	3	8.8	10	29.4	34	100
1	30	34.0	8	9.1	27	30.6	88	100
2	42	38.2	26	23.6	21	19.0	110	100
3	68	48.6	21	15.0	21	15.0	140	100
4	375	44.5	128	15.2	186	22.1	841	100
5 - 9	460	32.3	331	23.3	270	19.0	1423	100
10 - 14	470	31.2	387	25.6	246	16.3	1512	100
15 - 21	96	19.3	138	27.8	75	15.1	497	100
22 - 28	48	19.8	67	27.7	25	10.3	242	100
29+	38	20.9	48	26.4	13	7.1	182	100
Not stated	24	-	28	-	9	-	79	-
TOTAL	1668	32.4	1185	23.0	903	17.4	5148	100

Source: ABS Census 1981 Cross-Classified Table No 25 (Cat. No 81.501)

A report from the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations entitled Employment Prospects by Industry and Occupation: a Labour Market Analysis July 1983, provided information about the relative prospects of various industries. The overall picture between 1972 and 1983 is summarised by the Department in the following words:

"The industry division showing largest growth in total employment, in both absolute and percentage terms, was Community Services, in which there was an increase of 192,000 or 24% in 5-year average employment levels between 1973-77 and 1978-82. Other divisions showing noticeable growth were Finance, Property and Business Services (up 83,000 or 19%); Wholesale and Retail Trade (up 76,000 or 7%); Transport and Storage (up 22,000 or 9%); Public Administration and Defence (up 19,000 or 19%); and Recreational, Personal and Other Services (up 18,000 or 5%).

Industry divisions showing only minor employment change over 1973-82 were Communication; Mining (which had an increase of only 11,000 workers despite a growth of 14%); and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting. Noticeable declines were evident in Manufacturing (down 103,000 or 8%) and Construction (down 25,000 or 5%)."

(P. 211).

Table 7 relates the pattern of employment of Lebanese born to changes in employment for various industries. It indicates that manufacturing and construction have experienced significant declines over the decade and that Lebanese born workers are heavily concentrated in manufacturing and well represented in construction industries. Some industries showed a growth in the number of employed persons over the decade. In particular, public administration (a relatively small industry) and community services (the third largest industry) showed considerable growth. In both industry groups the Lebanese community is substantially under-represented. Indeed, the only group in which there has been noticeable growth and in which the Lebanese are over-represented is wholesale and retail trade.

TABLE 7 - Industry Change 1972-1983 and Lebanese Composition (% of employed persons)

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Lebanese*</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>%</u>	<u>Total*</u> <u>Australian%</u>	<u>% Changes**</u> <u>1973-1982</u>
Agriculture	107	0.5	6.0	Minor Change
Mining	40	0.2	1.4	Minor Change
Manufacturing	7422	35.2	17.5	-8
Gas, Electricity	75	0.4	2.0	+19
Construction	1103	5.2	6.3	-5
Whole, Retail Trade	4779	22.7	17.4	+7
Transport, Storage	1728	7.7	5.2	+9
Communication	353	1.7	2.0	Minor Change
Finance, Business	669	3.2	8.4	+19
Public Administration	243	1.2	5.6	+7
Community Service	911	4.3	14.9	+24
Recreation	933	4.4	5.2	+5
Not Stated	2825	13.4	7.7	
TOTAL:	21088	100.0	100.0	

\* Source: DIEA Profile '81, Lebanon and Total Australian Population

\*\* Source: DEIR Employment Prospects by Industry and Occupation

These data confirm that, in part, the unemployment rate of the Lebanese may be explained by reference to their relative concentration in declining industries. However, it cannot, on its own, explain the high rate. A comparison with some other overseas born countries makes this clear.

TABLE 8 - Industry Composition of Selected Birthplace (% of employed persons) Victoria, 1981

<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Manufacturing</u>	<u>Construction</u>	<u>Community Service</u>
Greece	36.3	5.1	5.7
Italy	29.9	12.9	6.4
Malta	38.5	5.0	7.5
Yugoslavia	44.3	9.9	7.0
Lebanon	35.2	5.2	4.3

Source: DIEA Profile '81 selected communities

In all four other birthplaces listed in Table 8, the combined proportion of people in manufacturing and construction exceeds that of the Lebanese. In the case of Yugoslav born the difference is quite substantial. Judged by industry concentration alone we might have expected high unemployment levels among all groups. However the unemployment levels of the other groups are not much higher than the overseas born average and in the case of Italian born, substantially below that of Australian born.

#### Period of Arrival by Industry of Employment

If we link together period of arrival with the industry of employment, a different picture emerges. We know that recent arrivals tend to work in certain sections of manufacturing and construction industries. Table 9 shows that the proportions of recent arrivals of the more traditional sources have a high propensity to work in manufacturing and construction. Indeed, they are more likely to do this than are the Lebanese. However, it will be noted that the proportion of employed recent arrivals in manufacturing and construction as a proportion of the total employed population for each birthplace is much higher for the Lebanese than for the other groups. This strongly suggests that the downturn in the manufacturing and construction sectors is having a much greater impact on the Lebanese than the other communities.

TABLE 9 - Period of Arrival and Industry Concentration June 1981  
(Victoria) Selected Birthplaces

	PROPORTION OF RECENTLY ARRIVED (0-9 years) EMPLOYED IN MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION			PROPORTION OF RECENTLY ARRIVED EMPLOYED PERSONS AS A PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL EMPLOYED POPULATION OF EACH BIRTHPLACE	
	Manufacturing	Construction	Total	%	Number
Greece	52.1	3.8	55.9	7.4	46,036
Italy	46.6	11.6	58.2	3.6	69,633
Lebanon	47.3	0.8	48.1	49.1	4,264
Malta	54.7	2.9	57.6	12.7	16,776
Yugoslavia	64.0	4.1	68.1	15.6	36,974

Source: ABS Cross-Classified Tables 1981, Table No. 25

The material in Table 9 suggests that the period of arrival of the employed population is a reliable indicator of unemployment levels.

In addition to this, there is evidence that Lebanese workers tend to be employed in those sections of manufacturing which have experienced a decline in employment over the last decade. A full analysis is not possible here but Table 10 provides some evidence of concentration.

TABLE 10 - Proportions of Lebanese Workers in Selected Industries June 1981  
(Victoria) (%)

Birthplace	Food, Beverages and Tobacco	Textiles	Clothing & Footwear	Transport & Equipment	Total of Four Industries
Greece	12.0	6.2	25.7	14.7	58.6
Italy	9.0	5.4	24.7	14.5	53.6
Lebanon	8.0	6.6	24.9	21.7	61.2
Malta	12.6	3.7	7.9	17.9	42.1
Yugoslavia	15.6	6.6	11.1	17.7	51.0

Source: ABS Cross-Classified Tables 1981, Table No. 68

In conclusion, therefore, it may be said that the principal reason for the high unemployment rate of Lebanese people may be found in the length of residence in Australia. The proportion of the Lebanese employed population which is recently arrived is very high. It may be the case that this factor alone accounts for the high rate. Undoubtedly other factors have some effect although it is difficult to gauge the extent of such effects.

A further characteristic of Lebanese is their tendency to be involved in small businesses as owners or employers. Largely because of this the Project team decided that an employment strategy should attempt to build upon this expertise. Table 11 provides some evidence for this. It compares occupational status of Lebanese born in selected occupations with all overseas born and the general community. The table shows that the Lebanese who are employed in the professional or administrative occupations are predominantly employers. Two thirds of the Lebanese in these categories are employers compared to 13.2% and 10.9% for the overseas born and the general community respectively.

In a similar way if we look at the occupation status of shop keepers and proprietors - a typical area of small business - we find that over two thirds of the Lebanese born are self-employed. This is more than three and a half times the community average and more than double the overseas born average.

However in the case of tradesmen and labourers the Lebanese are more likely to be employed as wage and salary earners and less likely to be self-employed or employers. This tends to suggest that as Lebanese move out of the blue collar occupations they are more likely to establish a business than to work as an employee.

TABLE 11 Selected Occupations By Occupational Status  
Of Lebanese Born; Victoria 1981 (%)

<u>Professional/Administrative*</u>					
	Wage and Salary Earners	Self Employed	Employer	Unpaid Helper	Total
Lebanese	34.4	3.1	62.0	0.3	100
Total					
Overseas Born	82.1	4.7	13.2	0.1	100
Total					
Employed Persons	85.1	3.8	10.9	0.1	100
<u>Shop Keepers/Proprietors/Shop Assistants</u>					
Lebanese	21.2	68.5	7.3	2.7	100
Total					
Overseas Born	59.7	33.5	5.9	1.0	100
Total					
Employed Persons	76.5	18.2	4.6	0.7	100
<u>Labourers/Tradesmen</u>					
Lebanese	95.7	2.4	1.4	0.4	100
Total					
Overseas Born	91.4	6.4	2.1	0.1	100
Total					
Employed Persons	90.1	7.3	2.5	0.1	100

\* ABS, Occupational categories 0 and 1  
 Source ABS Cross-Classified Table No 8



A summary of the position of the Lebanese community might be as follows. It is composed of a high proportion of recently arrived migrants. A large proportion have arrived since 1976. These people, coming as they do from a refugee and family reunion situation, have relatively few transferable skills. They have entered occupations and industries which are currently bearing the brunt of both the economic recession and longer term structural and technological change. They have large families and many have problems with English.

#### THE LEBANESE EMPLOYMENT PROJECT

##### Establishment of the Lebanese Employment Committee

As part of its normal monitoring of the monthly labour force data, the Ethnic Affairs Commission in late 1983 drew attention to the very high unemployment rates recorded for Lebanese born in Australia as has just been described. In response the Commission organised meetings with various representatives of the Lebanese community to discuss the situation and to suggest strategies. As a result of these consultations the Minister for Ethnic Affairs appointed a Lebanese Employment Committee. The Committee attempted to represent all sections of the Lebanese community and included a doctor, an academic, a businessman, a community worker, a trade unionist and a priest.

This Committee in turn with the assistance of the Commission and funding from the Ministry of Employment and Training, established the Lebanese Employment Project. The Project was provided with a staff of three - a research worker, a bilingual community worker and a bilingual typist/receptionist (see Appendix II). The sole purpose of the Project was to investigate means by which long-term employment opportunities could be created for Lebanese people.

The Lebanese Employment Project began by generating publicity through the Arabic media and by holding meetings organized with various Lebanese groups explaining the current interest of the Government in job creation.

From the start there was exceptional interest amongst the Lebanese who were interested in establishing small businesses and in obtaining offers of capital and business advice from the Government.

### Options and Alternatives

A fundamental element of the approach of the Committee was to attempt to relate the employment opportunity proposals to the existing skills held by members of the community. It was the view of the Committee that Lebanese people in fact have skills but that they are either not currently in demand or are not recognised or are undervalued. In many cases Lebanese workers will have few formal qualifications, having learnt their craft through practical experience.

Lebanon in the 1970's was a highly urbanized, commercial centre of the Middle East with a very large Government bureaucracy and a considerable number of rural workers but with relatively little secondary industry. Apart from areas of business the Lebanese generally have not been able to enter the same areas of employment in Australia that they were involved in back in Lebanon.

Given these facts, and given the early discussions and consultations, the committee decided that an appropriate method of harnessing the entrepreneurial skills of the Lebanese community was through worker co-operatives. This decision was helped by the fact that the Ministry of Employment and Training was encouraging the development of these co-operatives. Before discussing this decision it is worth discussing briefly the broad options open to Lebanese in working with Governments to generate meaningful employment.

Two alternative approaches were considered, affirmative employment and participation in job creation schemes.

With affirmative employment it was not considered to be a practical option in the short term especially given that, initially, this Project was expected to run for a year. It seems likely that affirmative employment will be an important issue in the near future and public sector employment will play an important role. It would be preferable when considering public sector affirmative employment to look to a wide range of ethnic groups rather than focus on a single community. However, within the near future it may be desirable to use a community such as the Lebanese on a pilot basis.

A further option was to consider direct job creation schemes. Unfortunately, there are no commonly agreed notions of job creation. Most Government schemes such as the Employment Initiative Programme or the Community Employment Programme are, in fact, short term training and work experience schemes. Although the project encouraged members of the Lebanese community to participate in these programmes, it was decided not to make this a primary focus of the Project.

After due consideration it was decided to focus on establishing Lebanese run co-operatives as the most appropriate basis for generating employment for their community.

#### Establishing Co-operatives in Victoria

There are numerous forms of co-operatives that have been established in Victoria, these include producer co-operatives, credit unions, financial co-operatives, retail co-operatives and worker co-operatives. In Australia worker co-operatives are the smallest section of the co-operative movement.

The main features of co-operatives are that they are for the mutual benefit of the members. They are democratic and they are open. They also emphasize a commitment to the education of members and that rather than seeking private profit they seek to use their surplus to meet group needs.

The Lebanese Employment Project decided to promote the formation of worker co-operatives, in which members join together to produce goods and services.

A co-operative is a formal, legally established association of individuals, usually of limited means, who have voluntarily joined together to achieve common economic ends through the formation of democratically owned and controlled business enterprises. In Victoria co-operatives are incorporated under the Co-operation Act 1981.

All co-operatives are legal entities and even the worker co-operatives are the legal employers of their own worker members. Co-operatives are governed by common law, specific legislation and regulations which cover the way they operate as a business and the way they produce, sell and advertise goods or services. All co-operatives must observe award wages and working conditions. Workers have a legal right to join trade unions and it is illegal to prevent workers from doing so.

There are three major types of co-operatives:

- i) Worker Co-operatives: the members are the workers who join together to conduct a business and create and maintain their own employment. The workers are collective entrepreneurs who may or may not appoint managers. If there are managers they are accountable to the workers.
- ii) Consumer Co-operatives: the members are individuals who join together to provide common goods or services. If the co-operative has employees they usually work in an employee relationship to management. There may be a strong emphasis on member decision-making and participation. Workers may be encouraged to become members and participate in decision-making. The provision of continued service/benefit to members is central.

- iii) Marketing Producer Co-operatives: the members are self-employed individuals/businesses, providing similar products/services, joining together to collectively buy and/or sell goods and services. These co-operatives tend to operate on traditional business and management principles and practices.

Conversion co-operatives are existing business enterprises (sole trade, partnership, company) which convert into co-operatives - usually a worker co-operative.

The structure of worker co-operatives are democratic. In the general meeting the co-operatives make the general decisions, always respecting one member one vote. Elected from this meeting are the directors who are responsible for the daily affairs of the co-operative.

Of course the structure is not always harmonious and one can expect there will be clashes, and members may often feel disgruntled. Clashes also occur in private business, but co-operatives can offer more scope for their resolution, because in the end the good will of the members and open discussion should help reach common decisions. Worker co-operatives also have rules which set out their social aims and practices which are consistent with the principles of co-operation, the rules also set out procedures to settle conflicts.

#### Co-operative Developments

Since 1981 the Ministry of Employment and Training (MEAT) has set aside resources for the establishment of co-operatives. The economic viability of a co-operative is not simply a function of co-operation. Viability requires adequate capital, managerial skills and among other things, a detailed knowledge of markets and Australian business practice. All of these requirements were obviously lacking when the Lebanese Employment Project launched the idea of worker co-operatives in the Arabic media and in meetings with Lebanese groups.

The eventual success of these worker co-operatives in achieving economic viability depends on the assistance they can receive and the availability of capital through loans and grants. This is being made possible by the collaboration of the Lebanese Employment Project with MEAT's Co-operative Development Programme and Preston TAFE's Small Business Department.

The prime objective of future funding for these co-operatives is economic viability but at the same time it is critically important that the funding is directed to people who need it. The Lebanese Employment Project is therefore testing the possibility of establishing worker co-operatives that benefit migrant workers.

#### **DEVELOPING LEBANESE CO-OPERATIVES**

##### **Community Interest**

The Lebanese Employment Project began in March 1984. The first step was to organize meetings with Lebanese people, publicise its work in the Arabic media and through Arabic speaking welfare workers. The possibility of establishing worker co-operatives was raised explicitly.

The possibility of creating long-term jobs was enthusiastically received by many of the people we spoke to. We found that many of these people were interested in starting small businesses.

We explained that there was the possibility of the Government giving financial aid in the form of loans and grants to those business enterprises that can demonstrate that they can offer long-term, viable jobs and are prepared to try a new form of social ownership through a co-operative.

Eight groups eventually came forward with an interest in establishing a co-operative business. The organising base of each of the groups varied. Two groups were organized around village associations, two were community/self-help groups, two were extended families, one was organized around a church and one was an existing business that was considering expansion.

In June a public meeting and workshop was organized with the eight Lebanese groups to establish whether the extent to which they were committed to these co-operative principles and to the establishment of co-operative enterprises.

Immediately after the public meeting a number of groups dropped out because they did not feel they could meet the requirements of worker co-operatives.

#### Groups that Leave

It is worth examining in some detail why some groups continued on with the idea of establishing a co-operative and others dropped out.

In our discussions with groups as to their reasons for not wanting to form a co-operative, it was apparent that reasons were often similar depending on the form of association that existed amongst the individuals in the different groups. We now turn to consider these reasons according to the category of each group.

#### Village Organizations:

Both of these groups resided in Melbourne's inner and western suburbs. In the last few years large factories near to where they lived had closed down and shifted to outer industrial suburbs, while in other factories nearby there had been mass retrenchments. The decline of the industrial base of these inner Western suburbs had particularly affected the Lebanese in these areas who had worked in the factories.

With one group we found considerable interest in small business and they all came from the same village in Lebanon. Even though the village association meant the group was very united, it also meant it was hierarchical, based on traditional relationships. They were suspicious about the Government assisting them to help themselves. Rather their experience encouraged them to request more social workers to help them with their immediate problems.

Other aspects of the co-operative style did not appeal to them. They were naturally suspicious of other Lebanese groups in the Project with whom they believed themselves to be in competition for funds. The co-operative style of business planning was entirely new to them and despite the cohesiveness of the group the co-operative model clashed with their cultural style. It soon became obvious that establishing a co-operative tends to assume far more in terms of social skills and expertise than had first been anticipated.

The experience of a second group confirmed this. The second group was also a village association. Early on they demonstrated considerable interest in their project. Their interest stopped for a number of reasons. They lacked some of the skills needed; they were hierarchical and dependent on one individual; and they also found great difficulty in working with Government Departments and procedures mostly because it was outside their previous experience. They too were suspicious of other Arabic groups that were interested in the Co-operative Programme.

Village associations did not prove to be a good basis on which to establish a co-operative. This seems surprising given the enormous co-operation and unity amongst the individuals. Paradoxically the co-operative model encouraged the members to think of themselves as individuals rather than as members of a communal group. Thus they tended to see themselves in competition with each other and in competition with other groups.

#### Extended Family groups:

Of the two family groups one dropped out very early. This family was committed to start a business and seemed interested in the co-operative idea but found the idea of business planning as too time consuming and it was an area they were not interested in.



The second group lasted longer. However they too were anxious to get on with the task of building a business. Preparations in terms of the theory of co-operatives or general education about establishing and running a business was perceived as a distraction. In essence they believed they had enough experience to start a business - all they needed was help with the capital. Unfortunately the process of forming a co-operative model was not perceived as responding to this need.

One emphasis of the co-operative programme was the pre-business training which involved formal classes on business practice and the development of a co-operative infrastructure. These two groups tended to find this training as wasteful and of no immediate value.

The extended families were never at ease with the co-operative model, as they were not committed to the principles or the ideology of co-operation. They would have preferred a model where they could start the business immediately. It is questionable whether the extended family can be the basis of a co-operative enterprise. The involvement of these two groups was one-sided in that they were interested only in establishing the business.

#### Expansion of an existing business:

The business specialized in Arabic translations and printing. The owner was interested in expanding and in turning it into a co-operative so that people would be committed to its success. It failed because the proposed members, (a minimum of nine members are necessary to start a co-operative) could not reach a common agreement on the direction of the project

#### A church based group:

This was a group which occasionally did catering work. They were interested in expanding and having some paid staff. However they were not really interested in forming a worker co-operative, rather they were interested in a more efficient charity agency for their church. The Co-operative model did not suit the structure and needs of this group.

### The Beginning of Two Lebanese Co-operatives

After three months discussion and consultation by mid 1984 only two groups remained who had the commitment to take the necessary steps to establish and develop a co-operative.

The first step they took was to attend the "Co-operative Intenders Course" developed by the Business Studies Department of Phillip Institute (Preston Campus). This course covered what is involved in establishing a co-operative and assesses the potential of the proposal.

Both groups attended the course and drew up a submission to participate in the "New Enterprise Course". These submissions went to a Co-operative Funding Committee of MEAT which examined whether they had economic potential.

Both submissions were approved by the funding committee and both groups went on to the "New Enterprise Course" where they were to prepare a feasibility study and a business plan. Both of these courses are run by Preston T.A.F.E. and for both courses material was prepared in Arabic. Preston T.A.F.E. also supplies assistance and expertise to help the groups in the preparation of their business plan.

The final step is for the business plan to be examined by the Co-operative Funding Committee, the recommendations of which were to be passed to the Minister for Employment and Training for a decision. At the time this Report was being written both groups were still at the stage of producing a feasibility study and business plan.

It is worth examining why these groups were able to generate such a commitment to co-operation and business planning.

i) The Broadmeadows Arab-Australian Work Co-operative

The Co-operative originated from an Arab Self Help Group, established in Broadmeadows in 1983. The Self Help Group set itself certain social objectives which included the desire to unite the local Arabic Speaking Community; to aid and assist the community; to help establish a social club and to act as a pressure group to secure more services. The idea of the co-operative also became an objective of the Self-Help Group and in 1984, eight unemployed members of the Group met and decided to establish a worker co-operative.

The success of this group was that it was a cohesive group that shared similar social objectives. The group also benefitted from having a number of well educated, bilingual members who gave a strong impetus to the group.

This co-op. is seeking to establish a middle-eastern food store in the Broadmeadows area. Currently there is no store in the area which stocks middle-eastern goods even though there has been an increasing number of middle-eastern people moving into the area.

ii) The Coburg Australian Arab Worker Co-operative

This co-op also originated from a previously constituted organization. The organization was the Australian-Arab Educational Cultural Centre (AAECC) which was formed in 1983. Again the group benefited by originating amongst people who shared common social aims. In the case of the AAECC it was established as a non-secretarian organization which provides social and cultural activities for the Lebanese and Arabic speaking communities.

This group was fortunate that one member had been involved in co-operatives in Lebanon and that it also had a number of well-educated bilinguals.

The aim of this co-op was to establish a Lebanese restaurant. The members of this co-op came from the Australian Arab Educational Cultural Centre.

Both groups had many similarities. They both originated from previously constituted groups that had very strong social aims of benefitting their community. They both had members with various backgrounds some had business experience, some were well-educated and others were very articulate.

Members of both groups were also able to establish social goals through their co-operatives to meet the needs and aspirations of the members.

#### **PROJECT ASSESSMENT: PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS**

##### **Assessment**

The Lebanese Employment Project's aim was the establishment of a pilot employment project for unemployed Lebanese workers. Hence its role was both as an educational unit explaining the Government's interest in job creation and the potential of schemes like the Community Employment Programme (CEP) and the Co-operative Development Programme (CDP); and a developmental unit by assisting groups in the preparation of CEP submissions and the development of co-operatives.

The educational side was greatly assisted by being based at the Ethnic Affairs Commission (EAC) and by the employment of a very competent bilingual community liaison officer. The EAC has very good relationships with many ethnic groups and the various foreign language media. The Commission has a strong emphasis in working directly with groups in the various ethnic communities and believes in developing projects with them. Hence it has earned a certain respect which makes it easier to contact and earn the support of the Lebanese community.

The educational role of the project demanded a great number of meetings with members of the Lebanese community and the use of the Arabic media. The project was also assisted by the Arabic speaking welfare workers who helped organize meetings and publicize the project. The philosophy of this approach was that any new enterprise demanded the direct involvement of Lebanese workers.

The co-operative development side of the project demanded the co-operation of the Lebanese Employment Project with Preston TAFE's Small Business Department and MEAT's Co-operative Development Programme. The Lebanese Employment Project organized and assisted the various Lebanese groups, it explained the co-operative programme, helped in developing the idea and the infrastructure of the co-operative. The project worked very closely with the groups, participated in their meetings and acted as an intermediary between the groups and the Ministry of Employment and Training. Members of the groups were initially unaccustomed to working with Government departments and so that skill had to be developed. As the groups progressed they negotiated more directly with the Co-operative Development Programme.

The Lebanese Employment Project also ensured that study material was translated and interpreters were available when needed. This demanded a close collaboration with Preston TAFE which organized the business education aspect of the co-operative programme.

#### **FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

##### **1) Co-Operatives**

This pilot employment project targetted Lebanese born workers and was successful in ensuring their participation and the development of new enterprises that were consistent with the principles of co-operation.

There have been other groups from various ethnic communities that have expressed an interest to the Ethnic Affairs Commission about the possibility of establishing co-operative enterprises. As has already been emphasized these groups will need specific resources to help them realize their goals. It would seem obvious that if the Government only considers co-operative proposals that are submitted independently it would be inevitable that English-speaking, professionals - particularly from the welfare sector - will predominate. If the Government wishes to see an increase of submissions from working-class migrants then it will need to follow a more dynamic role.

This demands a co-operative effort that specifically targets itself at ethnic communities. The unit will need to be educational, in that it can make people aware of the existence and potential of co-operatives; and developmental so that it can assist in the developing the co-operative idea and in developing the new enterprise. Such a unit would have to work closely with the established Co-operative Development Unit, it would also need to be multi-lingual and would need to have good contact and rapport with the ethnic communities. The EAC would be the obvious place to house such a unit, because of its contact and status with the ethnic communities.

## 2) Other areas of job-creation

One of the areas of success of the Lebanese Employment Project has been its ability to work well with the various Lebanese groups in Melbourne and its ability to use the Arabic media to raise the issue of unemployment.

It is currently assisting the formation of a Lebanese Teachers Association to look at the problems of the recognition of teaching qualifications from Lebanon in Victoria. It has also sponsored the establishment of a committee which will organize a Lebanese Day in June 1985 around the theme of unity and peace.

The Project has been able to demonstrate a commitment to work on employment strategies for Lebanese workers without being diverted by partisan issues in the Lebanese community.

There is a further area that might be tackled and that is in developing strategies for assisting members of the Lebanese community in small business.

This could act as a model for assisting other small businesses being established by ethnic minority groups. Such a project would analyse the problems facing Lebanese enterprises and look at possible remedies. Often these businesses are hampered by a lack of access to sufficient capital, lack of adequate information, advice and business education. The sponsorship of worker co-operatives, as a particular form of small business, should continue to be one area of activity.

The success and status of the Lebanese Employment Project with the Lebanese community and the good relationship established with the Small Business Department of Preston TAFE makes it a useful unit to take on such a project. Currently Preston TAFE is interested in supporting small businesses established by ethnic minorities but they find they lack adequate facilities, contacts and skills. Its work with the Lebanese co-operative indicates that with adequate co-operation, appropriate business education courses could be established.

In responding to structural change in industry, we must look at concrete alternatives to mass unemployment even if they are small scale. Given the dependency of so many in the Lebanese community to small business we should seek strategies to tackle the problems these businesses face. In this respect it would be useful to assist the development of small businesses in labour intensive service industries through provision of schemes that would enable Lebanese greater access to capital, training and business advice.

Recommendations

Given the success of the project to date and the considerable interest and support it has generated in the Lebanese community it is to be hoped that the project will receive additional Government support to achieve the following tasks:

- i) To inform the wide Lebanese community of the developments of the co-operatives.
- ii) To assist the wide Lebanese community to develop other employment initiatives based on the experiences of the first year. This might include support for development of the further co-operatives, support in obtaining appropriate training to establish small business enterprises and/or support for developing training appropriate for Lebanese women as discussed above.
- iii) To monitor and evaluate the development of the Lebanese co-operatives and of other employment and training initiatives and to provide feedback to the Lebanese community and Government agencies.
- iv) To initiate discussions with other ethnic community organisations about the relevance of the Lebanese Employment Project for their communities.



APPENDIX I

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR LEBANESE BORN  
AND TOTAL AUSTRALIAN LABOUR FORCE (AUGUST, 1981-NOV., 1984)

	LEBANON	TOTAL LABOUR FORCE
	%	%
August 1981	18.7	5.6
September 1981	18.5	5.7
October 1981	*	5.5
November 1981	*	5.5
December 1981	*	6.3
January 1982	*	6.5
February 1982	*	7.0
March 1982	*	6.6
April 1982	*	6.4
May 1982	18.2	6.6
June 1982	*	6.6
July 1982	18.1	6.6
August 1982	*	6.7
September 1982	20.1	7.3
October 1982	27.7	7.7
November 1982	27.1	8.0
December 1982	27.3	9.6
January 1983	28.0	10.1
February 1983	26.5	10.7
March 1983	30.8	10.4
April 1983	36.0	10.2
May 1983	28.8	10.3
June 1983	30.8	9.9
July 1983	29.5	9.8
August 1983	31.1	9.9
September 1983	27.8	10.2
October 1983	33.7	9.3
November 1983	30.1	8.9
December 1983	30.5	9.6
January 1984	29.9	10.3
February 1984	28.0	10.4
March 1984	26.4	9.7
April 1984	28.1	9.5
May 1984	32.7	8.9
June 1984	38.6	8.9
July 1984	29.6	8.4
August 1984	29.4	8.9
September 1984	34.4	8.6
October 1984	31.4	8.1
November 1984	31.9	8.0

## APPENDIX II: PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

### Committee

Dr. Afif Hadj	(Chairman)	Surgeon
Mr Trevor Batrouney		Senior Lecturer, Victoria College
Father Leo Saleeba		Catholic Priest
Mr Said Sidaoui		Businessman
Ms Mona Rafhi		Health Worker
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